
POND PLANTS

To maintain a healthy and attractive pond it is necessary to achieve an ecological balance between all the pond's inhabitants. Clear water, healthy fish and lush plants will add greatly to the beauty of your garden. There are many excellent books available on pond care and culture, including how to select and care for pond hardware and fish. This fact sheet describes the types of plants to consider placing in an existing pond, and provides a brief overview of their placement and long-term care.

Submerged Oxygenators – A Vital Element

These underwater plants are critical to a healthy pond. They provide oxygen for fish and beneficial bacteria, compete with unwanted algae for light and nutrients, and provide food, shelter and a breeding environment for fish. Most submerged plants are sold as bunches of stem cuttings. These can be potted and placed at the pond's floor, or simply released to grow submerged. As a general rule, use one bunch of submerged plants per square foot of pond surface.

Floating Aquatics – A Tropical Touch

Most floating water plants sold in this area are tropical in origin. Treat these as annuals and replace yearly. Floaters add visual interest, help control algae by shading the pool, and the submerged roots provide shelter for fish. No more than one third of the total surface area should be covered by floating plants, or submerged plants will receive inadequate light.

Shallow Water Plants – Adding Color and Contrast

These hardy, semi-hardy, or tropical perennials will thrive in containers placed within the pond on shallow shelves or in moist pond side margins. Most shallow water plants grow well with somewhere between one to six inches of water over the top of their pots. Shallow water plants add flowers, foliage contrast and structure to the pond's appearance, provide screening for pond hardware and attract birds, frogs and other wildlife. If hardy, these plants can be removed from the pond and over-wintered in a sheltered area. Semi-hardy and tropical plants can be brought into a heated greenhouse or maintained as houseplants.

Bog Plants – Soggy but Happy!

Bog plants do well in soil that is constantly wet. They're great at the edges of natural ponds, stream sides or muddy pool edges. They add height, color and foliage contrast to spots with poorly drained soil. They can also be grown in containers kept constantly moist or placed in shallow saucers of water.

Water Lilies

Water lilies are probably the most recognizable and desirable water plants available. Tropical varieties must have protection from winter cold. Hardy species and hybrids can easily survive our winters as long as ponds are deep enough to remain unfrozen at the bottom. Hardy lilies come in a wide variety of colors and a range of sizes suitable for large ponds to table-top container gardens. Medium to large varieties should be placed 12-24 inches underwater and dwarf varieties 6-12 inches underwater. Leaves must reach the water surface to enable the plant to access oxygen. Newly purchased lilies should be placed as close to the surface as needed for the leaves to reach the top, then gradually dropped deeper as the plant grows. To over-winter lilies, simply drop the pots to the pond bottom in late fall. Ponds 24 inches or deeper are generally safe for over-wintering.